

policy. The results—though differing somewhat depending on statistical techniques used—suggest at times a short-run small positive effect, at times a short-run small perverse effect, and at other times no discernible effect—

The same document notes:

Despite the freeze, the food price index rose by about 9 per cent between November 14, 1972, and April 17, 1973, and is continuing to rise rapidly—

In the identical period the food price index in Canada, in the absence of any controls, rose by 8 per cent. That is not an excuse for the 8 per cent but it seems to be a useful comment to make about price and wage controls.

The hon. member for Don Valley twitted the government and this party for changing its mind from time to time. When last speaking on this subject I quoted from a document with which the hon. member had something to do. I want again to quote from that document because it is the most serious and objective study on wage and price controls ever undertaken in this country. It was undertaken by a Senate committee of which the hon. member was study director. I quote:

—the lengthy historical track record of direct controls and income policies is, on the whole, very bad. They have had a particularly nasty habit of letting down those who trusted in them just as inflationary pressures were mounting to their peak. They are often spoken of as though they were the ultimate, completely dependable weapon against inflation—one that governments can always use effectively if they dare. But the record suggests, on the contrary, that they are no such thing—

It is clear that to use the controls suggested by the hon. member for Don Valley would amount to nothing more than a futile attempt to sit on a lid that is bound to come off. I suggest it beggars credulity for the hon. member for Don Valley to say that because they are doing it in other countries, notwithstanding the evidence of his own study we should do it here.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Grier: It is all very well to call for action to protect the inflation expectations. I am not so sure that all forms of action necessarily have a therapeutic effect. If someone has a headache, you do not remove his appendix. Freezes and controls are being suggested as a means of breaking inflationary expectations. If the Tories are so concerned about those expectations, why have they refused to support giving the Prices Review Board the teeth to break those expectations?

Those who advocate price controls should know that, by their very nature, in a free society controls can only be maintained at best for a brief period of time. One member said the trouble with the American program is that they had to relax the mandatory controls. The reason was that the American people demanded that the controls be relaxed. I suggest it is folly to suggest mandatory controls will be acceptable in this country for the period of time suggested by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Tories have twitted this party about the way it is going to vote on this issue. I remember a time not very long ago, maybe ten years, when the Tories sat across the way with a minority government. They were looking for support and they were not too fussy where they got it. Before they start making moral judgments on the votes of others, they should remember when they were in that

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position. This debate is more of a political opportunity for them than a serious effort to deal with the problem.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (2130)

Mr. Grier: I do not see why I, as a member of parliament, should give them the opportunity which the people of Canada denied them last October. I am not here to do a job for the Tories. They can do their own work.

An hon. Member: You are doing a job for the Liberals.

Mr. Grier: I am here to do a job for the Canadian people who sent me to parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Grier: A few taunts from the Tories will not detract me from this purpose. We are satisfied that as a result of our efforts in this chamber, the Canadian people have been presented with more useful legislation that would have been the case had either of the elderly parties been given a majority. I realize it is almost impossible to persuade the Tories, or perhaps even the media, that our motives in this debate have something to do with the real issue. Nevertheless, I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that our concern here is to do a job to arrest inflation and not to play politics with a proposal the very advocates of which do not know its implications.

Mr. Fred A. McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): If I might be permitted, Mr. Speaker, I should like to continue the analogy of ten years ago which was used by the hon. member who preceded me in this debate. My reading tells me that the opposition of that day voted against the government because of political conviction in what they considered was the best interests of the policy they had supported as a party over a period of years. They did not hide behind any excuses for their vote on that day; they voted for Canada and their political convictions which is more than those on the extremely left of the House can claim at this time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCain: I am particularly concerned in this debate with the economics of agriculture because it seems to me to have been one of the items on which great emphasis has been placed by the government. I wish to start by recalling a meeting which I attended and at which the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) appeared as minister of agriculture in support of the Conservative party some ten or more years ago. He enunciated a philosophy at that time which was that this world of ours had advanced in its quest for a decent standard of living at a pace never before known in history. And this included food. He predicted that there would be in this world in the foreseeable future a shortage of protein and a shortage of carbohydrate.

It therefore becomes contingent upon any party in Canada to encourage agriculture in its production, to guarantee that it will come to its aid in times of overproduction and make agriculture one of the main forces of this country once again, as it once was. The hon. member